

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2336

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0577

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, AO

SUBJ: MILITARY SITUATION IN EASTERN MILITARY ZONE OF ANGOLA

1. SUMMARY. CONGEN OFFICER RECENTLY SPENT ONE WEEK IN EASTERN MILITARY ZONE (ZML) AND NOTICED MARKED "END OF TUNNEL" ATTITUDE ON PART OF ALL PORTUGUESE OFFICERS. THEY FEEL THEY HAVE DEFEATED BOTH MPLA AND ELNA IN EAST AND, AT LEAST FOR PRESENT, ARE IN NEARLY COMPLETE CONTROL OF MILITARY SITUATION IN ZML. END SUMMARY.

2. PORTUGUESE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WHO BRIEFED CONGEN OFFICER ASSERTED THERE ARE NO ELNA FORCES STILL INSIDE ZML AND ONLY A FEW SCATTERED BANDS OF MPLA INSURGENTS ALONG RIO CUANDO IN SOUTHEAST. PORTUGUESE ASCRIBE THIS TO BOTH INABILITY OF INSURGENTS TO OBTAIN FOOD AND RECRUITS FROM LOCAL POPULACE IN ANGOLA AND CONSTANT PORTUGUESE MILITARY HARRASSMENT THAT HAS WHITTLED THEIR EFFECTIVE STRENGTH DOWN TO 2150 (1800 FOR MPLA AND 350 FOR ELNA).

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EM MPLA REPORTEDLY REORGANIZING IN ITS ZAMBIAN SANCTUARIES AND ATTEMPTING TO FLESH OUT ITS DEPLETED RANKS FOR ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING A FIRM BASE OF SUPPORT INSIDE ANGOLA. FOR NOW PORTUGUESE ASSERT MPLA IS CONTENT WITH SHORT FORAYS OVER BORDER TO PLANT MINES. AND THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE STOMACH FOR DIRECT COMBAT WITH PORTUGUESE ARMY.

4. FOR LONG HAUL PORTUGUESE NOT SO SANGUINE. THEY REALIZE THAT LONG AS INSURGENTS LURK JUST ACROSS BORDER, THEY MUST CONTINUE TO SPEND CONSIDERABLE FUNDS MAINTAINING THEIR FORCES IN GARRISON POSITIONS IN ENTIRE ZML. WHILE THEY DON'T SEE HOW MPLA CAN REPLENISH ITS DEPLETED RANKS FROM THE FEW ANGOLANS (EST. 16,000) STILL IN ZAMBIAN REFUGEE CAMPS, THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT MPLA AND ELNA RECRUITING ZAMBIANS OR ZAIRIANS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH MANPOWER. (PORTUGUESE REPORT CAPTURING OR KILLING SEVEN ARMED ZAMBIANS INSIDE ANGOAL IN RECENT MONTHS.)

5. COMMENT. BASED ON PERSONAL CONTACTS, ON-THE-SCENE OBSERVATION DURING THIS AND EARLIER VISITS BY CONGEN OFFICERS (MAY AND JULY), CASUALTY REPORTS AND SELF-PITYING PROPAGANDA RECENTLY EMITTING FROM MPLA HEADQUARTERS IN DAR-ES SALAAM, CONGEN ACCEPTS AS ACCURATE BASIC PORTUGUESE PREMISE THAT INSURGENTS HAVE PULLED BACK TO THEIR SANCTUARIES. HOWEVER, WE CANNOT JUDGE VERACITY OF PORTUGUESE STATEMENT THAT INSURGENTS RANKS HAVE BEEN DECIMATED TO DEGREE CLAIMED. INSURGENTS' ABILITY TO RETURN TO THE FIGHT DEPENDS DIRECTLY ON NUMBER OF NEW TROOPS THEY CAN RAISE, AND THIS THEY MUST DO ALMOST COMPLETELY FROM AMONG ANGOLANS IN ZAMBIA AND ZAIRE. FULL REPORT FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.
BRIGGS

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